



Memorandum

To: FCC

From: Beth George, Executive Director  
Itasca Community Television, Inc.,  
724 Conifer Drive, Grand Rapids MN 55744  
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RE: Video Franchising Proceeding Number 05-311

In consideration of the discussions you are having regarding the efficacy of local franchise control of video delivery systems, I offer the following:

Just this month, five rural Minnesota communities came together to reaffirm a joint powers agreement for the sole purpose of ensuring quality delivery of public access cable television. This function is funded by the combined resources of these community's franchise fees. Their new commitment: Nearly 100 percent of the fees will go directly to support the service provider and improved technology systems so that area communities have access to public, education and government television. The provider, ICTV, is a non-profit organization with 25-years of public service to Itasca County. One-third of its operations are reliant on franchise fees.

In the discussions forming the new joint powers agreement, all of the communities wanted to ensure that nothing happened to their public access television service. One council member from a local township told me: "I watch other government meetings all the time, because I know we are all working on the same issues. Seeing how they handle it gives me better ideas on how to apply it to our township."

Our community leaders do not have time to attend the 19-20 meetings a month that we tape and cablecast, but they, and 8,500 more people, have access to the live meetings and replayed meetings each week. Our good relationship with the two area cable television providers even allows us to reach into communities that don't have franchise agreements because of small populations. We have become the county's public access station through such cooperation.

The nearest broadcast station to Grand Rapids is 90 miles away. About the only time issues make the news there is if there is a major felony committed or it is the fishing season opener. They care little of the economic development projects that we spend hundreds of hours covering each year.

Our citizens deserve better coverage. Our partnerships give citizens a daily newscast and a weekly news wrap-up program. Doctors talk about local medical facilities. Service providers give solid information about services to seniors, parents and less advantaged populations. The bulletin board keeps people aware of the activities of our vital county. A partnership with the Minnesota Supreme Court this year helped us educate 1,500 students in the process of oral arguments, plus provide the information to our viewers in real-time and in re-runs. The ICTV staff produced 3,000-plus hours of local television in 2005. Our volunteers provided another 1,000+ hours.

If rules or legislation take away the franchise ability of our communities, they take away this resource. We have to fund-raise for the other 2/3 of our budget. If we had to fund-raise for 100 percent, public access TV would likely go away.

I invite you to visit our web site [www.watchictv.com](http://www.watchictv.com) to see what we offer and how we operate. Our community built us. Franchise fees give us backbone support.

Please call me if you have questions or would like to discuss any of my points further. Rest assured you have pressures of the big telecoms asking you to back off in the interest of competition. But you need to be even more attentive to reasons why franchise systems work for communities.

Thank you for your time and attention to my commentary.